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THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

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Elsewhere in this issue appears a summary of an article by Professor Sihler on American Classicism, which appeared in the Evening Post of Sept. 7, as the supplement to an article on a similar topic, published in the same journal a year before (Sept. 26, 1906). Professor Sihler had already discussed this subject in a series of articles published a few years ago in the *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie*.

The articles do not furnish very pleasant reading for American students of the Classics. We cannot help feeling that in some way or other we have not lived up to our birthright, that, whether by our own supineness or by force of circumstances, we have let slip that which to our forefathers was a priceless possession, and as we remark the increasingly large number of American youth whose minds during the formative period have not been touched with the slightest breath of Greek culture, we cannot but feel that our educational system has not progressed.

In his brilliant essay, *Discipline vs. Dissipation*, Professor Shorey writes as follows (School Review, 1897):

The student who between the ages of twelve and twenty has thrilled at the eloquence of Cicero or Demosthenes, has threaded the mazes of the Platonic dialogue, has laughed with Aristophanes, has pored over the picturesque page of Livy, or apprehended the sagacious analysis of Thucydides, has learned to enjoy the curious felicity of Horace and the supreme elegance and tender melancholy of Virgil, has trembled before the clash of destiny and human will in the dramas of Aeschylus and Sophocles, has been cradled in the ocean of Homeric song, or attuned his ear to the stately harmonies of Pindar,—the student, I say, who has received this or a like discipline in the great languages and literatures of the world, has insensibly acquired the elementary materials, the essential methods, and the finer intuitive perceptions of the things of the spirit, on which all more systematic study of the mental and moral sciences must depend.

While this may sound to some like a rhapsody, I must fain believe that it is the sober truth, and so the perusal of Professor Sihler's article has led me to wonder whether our chief difficulty has not consisted in getting away from the authors themselves. Fifty years ago, we learn, on the thirtieth of December, 1847, was held the first meeting of the New York Greek Club, an association

whose members were drawn from many walks of life and from many varieties of culture. Their earliest meetings were devoted to the reading of papers prepared by members of the club, but they soon found that, instead of presenting their views about the Classics to their colleagues, it was more expedient to study the sources themselves of so much of the world's thinking. And so for years they read in succession the Greek authors, one member preparing, the rest following in the text. It is a unique story, that of mature men, busied with the cares of life, finding consolation and inspiration in the words of men whose names were great when the literature of the world was young, and I wonder whether we in our modern times are not persisting in the error which they were clever enough to see and reject. Almost every university has a classical club, almost every classical club has been troubled by the question of program, almost every classical club likewise has made the most important part of its existence the listening to papers prepared either by its members or by guests on topics connected with the Classics; almost every club has found it difficult to exist. Many have died, and the same experience is repeated when a new club is founded.

Now the classical authors themselves have stood the test of centuries of study by minds as great as themselves. They exist to-day with undiminished splendor and unweakened power because they are of the sort that perish not. They have presented their message for ages. It seems to be the irony of fate that to most of our classical students of the present day they do not present a message. Various courses are given in colleges and universities, many students read widely in Greek and Latin, but how few there are who mark, learn and inwardly digest only those who have occasion to examine know. Would it not be better to follow the example of the New York Greek Club, and let our students, young and old, read the great works of old in concert, with discussion? Would not the power of ancient literature make itself felt more where two or three are gathered together? It is possible—we know it so well—to read mechanically and not to know what we read. Is it not a pity that a work in Greek or Latin must always need

an interpreter? must every page of Greek require foot-notes and an appendix? must every page of Latin require an atlas and a classical dictionary? Can we not feel the master mind of Plato or Thucydides without a careful study of the Platonic canon or the temporal division of the Peloponnesian war? To my mind the Classics are dead only because we who teach them so regard them. If we were willing to act as priests of a living divinity we should find many to worship with us.

THE TRANSLATION OF LATIN

In some quarters there exists a feeling against the discussion of methods in the teaching of language. Each teacher, it is said, must build up his own method. This is true as to details, yet for all teachers dealing with minds of the same type the principles of teaching must be the same, though the details of application differ. It is with these principles, when applied to the translation of Latin into English, that this article deals, as they must be applied with regard to the immature minds of average secondary school pupils.

What is translation? Strange though it be, we probably could receive widely variant answers from teachers to this fundamental question. It is a complicated process, this art of translation. In its completed form it involves one of the most difficult literary exercises known to man. The total process may be resolved into several minor operations, only one of which has claim to be considered a real translation. Take, for example, this passage from the second book of the *De Bello Gallico* (2.10): *Hostes impeditos nostri in flumine adgressi magnam eorum numerum occiderunt; per eorum corpora reliquos audacissime transire conantes multitudine telorum repulerunt; primos, qui transierant, equitatu circumventos interfecerunt.*

In any attempt to translate this passage the first process is that of 'transverbalization':

'The impeded enemy, our men, in the river attacking, a great number of them, killed; over their bodies, the rest, most boldly trying to cross, by a multitude of missiles, they repelled; the foremost, who had (already) crossed, by the cavalry, having been surrounded, they killed'.

This gives an exact rendering of the Latin order of words and constructions; it gives us the Latin as it is, with a minimum of English coloring. To get the exact meaning of the passage such a preliminary survey is an absolute essential, unless we are so proficient that we do not need the medium of our own language to convey the meaning to us. But no one can pretend that the result is English.

A second process is a modification of this. It employs sufficient English idiom to make the sense perceptible, and alters the order for the sake of adhering to the Latin grammatical construction:

'Our men, attacking the enemy (when) impeded in the river, killed a great number of them, repelled with a multitude of missiles the rest, (who were) most boldly trying to cross over their bodies, (and) killed the foremost, who had (already) crossed, having surrounded (them) with cavalry'.

This sounds very familiar to the average teacher; it is the kind of translation called 'literal', sanctioned by the grammarian, required by the strict constructionist, and stamped with final approval by the classics of Bohn or Hinds and Noble. It has the virtue of being intelligible, but it is flat because it pays no attention to the emphasis, and it is couched in very weak English.

A third process—taboo in our schools—maintains the Latin order of emphasis, but disregards the grammatical construction:

'The enemy, when impeded, were attacked when in the river by our men, who killed a large number of them. Using these bodies as a bridge, the rest most boldly tried to cross, but were repelled by a multitude of missiles. The foremost, who had already crossed, were surrounded by our cavalry and killed'.

If translation be the transfer of exact meaning from the words of one language into those of another, this is a better translation than the preceding, for it gives the facts presented by the Latin in the order required, is livelier in tone, and is expressed in better English.

But as a matter of fact the last two examples present each one side of the problem. A perfect translation would employ idiomatic English without violating either Latin syntax or Latin emphasis. Since it is an impossibility to do this, the best translation can be only an approximation; yet in this uncertainty lies the charm and the value of the effort.

For illustration is presented an attempt to give a real translation of Vergil's famous lines (*Aen.* 6.851-853):

*Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento
(hae tibi erunt artes) pacisque imponere morem,
parcere subiectis, et debellare superbos.*

There must be strict regard to the ideas conveyed by words and emphasis, and a suggestion of the stately rhythm:

'Your mission, O Roman, remember, fulfill it, rule you the nations;

These shall be your ideals, always to compel the observance of peace,